

"The Gods of Mars"

By GORDON B. MOSS.

THE superheated imagination of Edgar Rice Burroughs has been at work again and the result is *The Gods of Mars*, a literary monstrosity.

In his latest book Mr. Burroughs outdoes himself in creating hideous men and beasts, inhabitants of Mars, on which planet John Carter of Virginia again finds himself after an absence of ten years. *The Gods of Mars* is purely a sequel or a continuation of a previous novel, and unless one has read the foregoing much of the story is vague. It was written for established readers of Burroughs's books, it is evident, for only they could appreciate such a tale. A reader not familiar with the author's type of story would undoubtedly lay it aside in disgust before finishing 100 pages.

When Mr. Burroughs wrote his first notable story, *Tarzan of the Apes*, his readers gasped, but swallowed the improbabilities of the tale. The well suspended mystery concerning the actual parentage of Tarzan, the man who talked and lived with a band of wild apes, was what held their interest. Other Tarzan stories followed, each a little more fantastic than its predecessor, until at last the author ventured on Mars. The inhabitants of that planet—if such there be—undoubtedly would rage at Mr. Burroughs could they read his revolting conception of them.

When the hero of the tale, John Carter, awakens on Mars once more he is lying upon the scarlet sward in a grove of trees. He notices strange creatures called plant men not far away, hideous monsters like misshapen humans with—but let Mr. Burroughs describe one in his inimitable way:

"Its hairless body was a strange and ghoulish blue, except for a broad band of white which encircled its protruding single eye, an eye that was all dead white—pupil, iris and ball.

"Its nose was a ragged, inflamed circular hole in the centre of its blank face, a hole that resembled more closely nothing that I could think of other than a fresh bullet wound which has not commenced to bleed."

Pretty creature, what? Its arms were boneless tentacles, with openings in the palms for mouths.

Here Carter found his old friend Tars Tarkas, a green man, engaged in a fight with some plant men and white apes. Carter joined in with his trusty long sword—and some thousands of the creatures must have been slain. But even two such valiant warriors had to retreat into a hollow tree conveniently provided with ladders, which they climbed and pulled up after them.

From the treetop they reached a golden cliff and entering a cave found they had entered the impregnable fortress of the Holy Therns, a white race who believed themselves immortal. After slaying several hundred ferocious banths, an animal peculiar to Mars and far more terrible than a tiger, they fought the Therns, and fought and fought so consistently that the story becomes an orgy of slaying. Finally they fought their way to the gardens on top of the cliff and after more fighting Carter found himself a prisoner of the First Born of Mars, a race of ebony black men, who live in a strange subterranean world of their own. Here he indulges in more fighting of plain and fancy varieties and finally escapes with a red Martian in an airplane.

Throughout his adventures it was Carter's desire to find his beautiful bride of ten years ago, the Princess Dejah Thoris. He is finally successful, only to lose sight of her in a manner that threatens a sequel to this already overdrawn tale.

Any attempt to produce a love interest between a human and a creature of such a weird environment as the author creates cannot but be unnatural and repulsive, but Mr. Burroughs doesn't mind.

We have seen photographs of the author and he is a rational looking individual. No doubt he is, but in *The Gods of Mars* he has produced a nightmare of a story that it would be a positive crime to allow an impressionable child to read. The least it would do to a youngster would be to scare it into forty-seven fits.

THE GODS OF MARS. By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS. A. C. McClurg & Co. \$1.35.

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American Branch, New York.

"The Hills of Refuge"

THE point has been pressed upon us of late that we need more sugar than has been our portion under the regulations of the Food Administration. Possibly it is to help fill out this particular shortage in our diet that Will N. Harben wrote the ultra-saccharine novel called *The Hills of Refuge*. For in its exposition of the all embracing triumph of virtue this story is cloying in the extreme.

William Brown was a banker who lived in Walnut street "near Beacon" in Boston, and like the neighborhood was correct and of good reputation. But like many an-



WILL N. HARBEN
Author of "THE HILLS OF REFUGE"

other banker in fiction and melodrama he speculated with other people's money. He lost \$60,000.

His brother Charles was what the unregenerate would call "a regular feller." He spent his money wildly, went on sprees, and the reader is introduced to him on one shocking Sunday morning when he was enduring the horrors of a "hangover." But when Charles discovered that William was about to commit suicide on account of his embezzlement Charles agreed to be the sacrificial goat and left Boston with the cloud of that crime hanging over him. Meanwhile he had secured a moral and an alcoholic change. To escape the police he joined a circus as a canvasman and eventually wound up in Mr. Harben's beloved Southland, where he hired out as a farm hand to Miss Mary Rowland, who was the brains and driving force of a down at heel Southern family.

Here in "the hills of refuge" he saved from death the victim of a drunken brawl in which Mary's two worthless brothers were the aggressors, saved Mary from a brutal suitor, converted the two boys from the paths of sin and even made the elder Rowland give up his foolish task of writing a genealogy of the Rowland family. And then, back in Boston, the guilty William suffered so bad a "nervous breakdown" that he too became regenerated and Charles was cleared of the imputation of crime and was free to marry the lovely Mary at last.

Incidentally we may mention that the manner in which Mary threw herself at Charles was very of the most advanced circles in Greenwich Village, thus seeming to prove that even rural Georgia has not been untouched by the most feminist theories of our degenerate Northern times.

THE HILLS OF REFUGE. By WILL N. HARBEN. Harper & Brothers. \$1.50.

This is the hour in which such a book as Herbert S. Houston's *Blocking Future Wars* assumes real interest and importance; and it is worth while to note that one of the points discussed by Mr. Houston is the question implied in a remark of the late Dr. Van Hise, president of the University of Wisconsin, in a public speech. Said Dr. Van Hise: "It appears to me that to form a league of nations which shall at the outset include all the free nations that wish to enter is inadvisable." Perhaps he was right; perhaps not. What Mr. Houston has to say about it will help many to make up their minds.

"The White Rook"

THE author of *The White Rook*, J. B. Harris-Burland, is an Englishman who devotes most of his literary effort to mystery stories. In this volume he has a fairly good set of characters: an aged nobleman who is brutal toward his beautiful wife; her former lover, just returned from service in India, and, of course, the beautiful wife. The lover, after coming to call and making a bit of reciprocated love to the wife, goes and plays chess with the nobleman, chess being old Sir Robert Grimwood's hobby.

Sir Robert disappears and a white rook with a red stain on it is found on the grounds. Sir Robert left a nasty note to his wife. Presently a gamekeeper is found dead. You can well imagine that inspectors came quickly from Scotland Yard. Enter also the wicked Lord Wiverly, who loves Lady Grimwood, and a Chinaman named Ling Foo, also a chess player and the possessor of a mysterious drug.

The author must be admired for mixing up his characters, but he cannot be forgiven for messing up the reader's emotions. It is not the rule to make a reader sympathize with a lady in a book and then at the finish to permit the bronzed faced hero to go and marry another, and rather limp, heroine. In fact it is the rule outside of tragedy to do quite the contrary. When a writer gets sick of his heroine he must stop and think whether the reader will also be weary of her.

Only villains cast pure but misunderstood ladies aside at the end of a book. Authors should not do this unless they are Thomas Hardys, and there is only one of him.

THE WHITE ROOK. By J. B. HARRIS-BURLAND. Alfred A. Knopf.

"Betty Marchand"

THERE is no brilliancy or humor in Beatrice Barnaby's story of *Betty Marchand*, but there are sanity, sweetness and the determined preservation of ideals. Many a hard working girl will find in it the reflex of her own hardships and temptations, a fact that may dim her eyes to the lack of the subtler graces. The story opens with the childhood of Betty, a childhood marred by humiliation that her "things" were so different from other children's. The funny old fashioned wooden skates several sizes too large were such a painful contrast to the shiny, perfectly fitting ones worn by her companions. Yet Betty did not fail in her resolve to do everything the other children did.

The modern child's splendor of appliances makes the author wonder, as all thoughtful people must, how much the latent resistance to difficulties is weakened by indulgent affection, but mothers reading of this little martyr's repeated falls on the ice would prefer almost anything to putting their own children through the same tortures.

The experiences of the fascinating Betty, which continue through a varied business career to a final happy marriage, seem largely biographical or certainly the fruit of intimate personal observation. Few business women are so irresistible to men as this heroine and fewer still so triumphantly rewarded for repelling the bold advances of their customers; but Betty had both the will and the way, and so she was able to make even her supreme renunciation fit exactly into the romancer's happy design.

BETTY MARCHAND. By BEATRICE BARNABY. George H. Doran Company. \$1.40.

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